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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: WASIT PROVINCIAL COUNCIL (PC) CHAIR: WASIT
GOVERNOR IS SIDELINING THE PC

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3024
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3023

Classified By: Classified by PRT Leader Robert Kagler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Wasit PRT reporting cable.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) In a slew of recent meetings and phone conversations with PRT, Wasit PC Chair Mohammed Hassan Jabbar, a friendly but normally circumspect PRT contact, has been increasingly frank with TL about his displeasure with Governor Latif Hamid Turfah. Hassan Jabbar objects specifically to Governor Turfah's autocratic handling of the province's ARDP capital budget, as well as the latter's passive attitude toward the Tribal Support Council program, which Hassan Jabbar sees as a government ploy to garner tribal votes for upcoming provincial elections. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) "The Governor's office is supposed to present projects to the PC for approval," said PC Chair Hassan Jabbar. "But now what they show us is very general, funding by category, ID 10 billion for municipalities, ID 20 billion for sewage, and they do not even follow that!" The handling of the 2008 budget represents a departure for Wasit, one that saw the PC lose control after a poor showing in executing the 2006 and 2007 budgets. "Prior to 2008, the PC used to divide up the budget by Qada and Nahiya," recalled Hassan Jabbar. "The system was not perfect; some local governments chose their projects poorly. In 2008, we tried to refine the system. We established a joint committee with eight members to oversee projects. It included a chairman, one member of the reconstruction committee, the heads of the services committee and the follow up committee, and four people from the Governor's side. No one from the Governor's office ever came."

[1](#)4. (C) According to the PC Chair, the apparatus run by the Governor is rife with political hacks: "Seven percent of the budget is set aside for supervision. The Governor spent this money to hire staff that have nothing to do with project supervision, and to run a new Ministry of Planning contracting office he selected a geography teacher." Yet Hassan Jabbar is not sanguine that the PC has much leverage over the Governor, despite the latter's unpopularity: "The Governor has the support of just enough members of the PC that he cannot be fired. He uses this one-third support of the PC to ignore the PC."

TRIBAL SECURITY COUNCILS

[1](#)5. (C) Tribal Security Councils (TSCs) have been another flash point: "The government is trying to set up a parallel security force without the permission of the PC," said Hassan Jabbar, flatly. "The councils are a way to win the support of the tribes for the elections. Paying off the tribes is a

tradition in Iraq. The British did it. Everyone wants the tribes on their side. They supported Saddam, and when the Sadrists were strong they supported them. If there is any benefit to Wasit from these councils, we will support them. But if they are going to enter into politics, we will stand against them. "

¶16. (C) As detailed in reftels, ISCI leaders are opposed to the Tribal Support Council concept, and Wasit is no exception. Wasit ISCI party leader (and leading PC candidate) Ahmed al Hakim has been broadly critical of Da'wa and, by implication, the Governor, over the idea: "ISCI supported the TSCs in Anbar when the government was weak. But we are afraid that the councils will get too strong and will be supervising the security forces, and that is not right," said al-Hakim (Note: al-Hakim used interchangeable phrases when describing TSCs and Sons of Iraq units. End note.) "If the national government is sending us the names of people that we have no control over, that is a problem. . . There is probably a political motive here: Da'wa wants these tribes to support them during the elections. But they need to follow the regulations of the Iraqi Security Forces."

THE GOVERNOR'S RESPONSE ON TSCS

¶17. (C) When asked about the TSCs, Governor Latif Hamid Turfah plays down their role: "ISCI and the Sadrists both had similar councils. The councils are going to help the government solve problems, but under certain restrictions, such as not interfering with the work of the local councils and not carrying weapons."

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COMMENT

¶18. (C) The PC Chair's frustration with the handling of Wasit's provincial capital budget is real; but even though at least one member (Da'wa party head Magid Ali Askar) has been outspoken on the issue, PRT is not aware of any organized movement by the PC to force the issue. The challenge for the PC is greater in part because the Governor is said to have agreed to certain reforms, but has yet not followed through, and the PC lacks a viable enforcement mechanism to bring him to heel. The battle lines over Tribal Support Councils appear to be drawn in a similar manner to other provinces, with the PC opposing their establishment, although PC Chair Hassan Jabbar (nominally independent but rumored to lean to ISCI) and ISCI leaders shift between describing the councils as a threat to Iraq's constitutional order on the one hand, and as a simple political payoff on the other. In all these situations the PC Chair's and others' comments manifest a healthy dose of partisan envy at the prospect of a rival party (Da'wa) bestowing largesse to the province's tribes. END COMMENT.

CROCKER